

Message Text

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14
ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CI
SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 11 CELEBRATION: ATMOSPHERICS

REFS: (A) 74 SANTIAGO 5594, (B) 75 SANTIAGO 6262

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE A CHILLY, RAIN-THREATENING DAY THERE WAS A SIZEABLE TURNOUT FOR THE SEPTEMBER 11 PARADE OF CIVILIANS SUPPORTING THE PINOCHET REGIME. PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS ALSO OCCURRED THROUGHOUT CHILE. THERE WERE NO RUDE NOTES. FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR PINOCHET AND TOP GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS APPEARED AT A PROTESTANT EVANGELICAL SERVICE -- REFLECTING TENSIONS BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY AND THE GOVERNMENT. BASICALLY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOWED THAT IT COULD STILL MOUNT AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF PUBLIC SUPPORT, BUT THE MEDIA EXAGGERATED ITS EXTENT. END SUMMARY.

2. BRISK AND SOMETIMES DRIZZLY WEATHER HELPED KEEP DOWN THE NUMBER OF CHILEANS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE MILITARY COUP. FOR THE FIRST TIME THE GOC CELEBRATED SEPTEMBER 11 IN SANTIAGO WITH A CIVILIAN PARADE. AS REPORTED IN REFTELS, IN 1974 AND 1975 THERE WERE LARGE RALLIES, SO THAT DIRECT COMPARISONS ARE OF LITTLE VALUE. SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE IN FRONT OF DIEGO PORTALES, THE GOVERNMENT BUILDING, WAVED FLAGS AND CHANTED WHEN PINOCHET,
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THE JUNTA AND THEIR WIVES APPEARED ON AN OPEN REVIEWING

STAND FOLLOWING PINOCHET'S MAJOR SPEECH. THIS YEAR PLAIN-CLOTHESMEN BORE THE BRUNT OF THE SECURITY DETAIL. SECURITY WAS UNOBTRUSIVE, INDEED HARDLY IN EVIDENCE.

3. PARTICIPANTS IN THE PARADE WERE IN LARGE PART YOUNG, AND GENERALLY ENTHUSIASTIC. THE UNIVERSITIES HAD A GOOD TURNOUT, AS DID THE "FRENTE JUVENIL." IN ADDITION, SCHOOLS WERE OUT AND SECONDARY STUDENTS HOPPED ON VARIOUS FLOATS AND JOINED DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS. LABOR, WOMEN AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS WERE MUCH IN EVIDENCE. FEW MAJOR UNIONS SHOWED, BUT MANY BANNERS OF THE PRO-GOVERNMENT "FRENTE LABORAL" SEEMED TO HAVE REAL WORKERS SURROUNDING THEM. WHAT WITH THESE GROUPS AND NUMEROUS WOMEN'S CONTINGENTS, THE LEVEL OF WORKING CLASS PARTICIPATION SEEMED HIGHER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS.

4. ALTHOUGH IT WAS HARD TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN LEVELS OF ENTHUSIASM AMONG THE THOUSANDS WHO HAD BEEN STANDING FOR HOURS AWAITING THEIR CHANCE TO MARCH, WE THOUGHT THE MIDDLE-CLASS PARTICIPANTS SHOWED MORE ELAN ON BALANCE. MOST PARTICIPANTS SINGLED OUT PINOCHET FOR HONOR -- THE JUNTA ITSELF RECEIVED LITTLE RECOGNITION.

5. EARLIER ON THE 11TH EMBOFFS HAD TAKEN A QUICK TOUR THROUGH SLUMS, AND LOWER AND MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS. THEY SAW NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD SENT OUT VEHICLES TO BRING IN THE CROWDS. BUNTING OR FLAGS BEDECKED A GOODLY PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENCES EVEN IN THE LOWEST INCOME AREAS. THE MILITARY ZONE COMMANDER'S ORDER FOR ALL DWELLINGS TO FLY THE FLAG UNDOUBTEDLY ENCOURAGED THIS SHOW OF PATRIOTISM, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT MOST CHILEANS KNEW THE ORDER WOULD NOT BE RIGOROUSLY ENFORCED. IN THE UPPER CLASS "BARRIO ALTO," WE WERE A BIT SURPRISED TO SEE A NUMBER OF HOMES WITHOUT FLAGS.

6. FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, THE MILITARY CHAPLAIN HAS CELEBRATED THE COMMEMORATIVE MASS FOR THE JUNTA AND OTHER HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AT THE MILITARY ACADEMY. CARDINAL SILVA IN 1974 MADE CLEAR THE CEREMONY WOULD NOT BE PERFORMED AT THE CATHEDRAL. THE GOVERNMENT SHOWED ITS PIQUE THIS YEAR, AS LAST, BY ATTENDING SERVICES SEPTEMBER 12 AT A LOCAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT MEETING. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND ATTENDED THIS YEAR, ABETTED BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO ARRANGED FOR PINOCHET TO ATTEND AND INVITE SOME HIGH RANKING ATTENDEES IN HIS NAME.

8. COMMENT: THREE YEARS INTO ITS RULE, THIS GOVERNMENT HAS LITTLE DIFFICULTY IN ARRANGING A MAJOR DISPLAY OF POPULAR SUPPORT. MOST OF THE TENS OF THOUSANDS WHO PARTICIPATED

OBVIOUSLY DID SO WILLINGLY, BUT WE HEARD SOME STORIES
HINTING AT COERCION. THE UNOBTRUSIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS
REFLECT THE HIGH DEGREE OF TRANQUILITY PREVAILING IN THE
COUNTRY.

9. AS FOR THE NUMBERS OF PARADE PARTICIPANTS AND WATCHERS,
ONE TELEVISION ANNOUNCER ENTHUSIASTICALLY SPOKE OF 600,000
AND THE PAPERS MENTIONED 300,000. THE SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT
TOLD A MISSION OFFICER THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS VERY HAPPY
WITH THE RESULTS. THE GOC ESTIMATED 100,000 IN THE PARADE
AND 150,000 WATCHING. SOME EMBASSY OFFICERS -- THEIR
CROWD-ESTIMATING CREDENTIALS NOT IMPECCABLE -- PUT THE TOTAL
AT A SPARSE 30,000-40,000. OTHER OFFICERS ESTIMATED HIGHER.
WE CONCLUDE THAT THE MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT EXAGGERATED BUT
THAT IT WAS A GOOD SHOW.
POPPER

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